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Disaster Recovery in the Cloud?

How does your business plan to continue technical operations in the event of a local or regional disaster? Do you have a business continuity plan that is more theory than reality? How can you be certain when the time comes to start the DR process it will work?

These are typical questions our customers have struggled with for years and only a small fraction have in their own minds addressed adequately. Those that have a level of confidence in their business continuity and disaster recovery plans have also invested substantial money in server and SAN infrastructure, replication software, network, and collocation to meet their DR requirements.

Cloud computing has shown real promise for outsourcing production environments however there is less discussion on how cloud computing can assist in a DR environment. It can be argued Cloud Computing is better aligned to meet requirements for DR environments. Yes, it will be a shared environment across several virtualized servers perhaps even across multiple data centers. Customer's production data will be copied in near real time to these same cloud environments by the service provider's backup and replication software.

Once your company's data is in the clouds and your DR infrastructure is as well, restoring this data to cloud server resources is merely a web based provisioning task done from anywhere on the planet. These solutions exist today and have become much more economical allowing even the SMB space to play ball.

With technologies like disk to disk back up in the local production environment and de-duplication to the cloud companies are finding they no longer need their legacy tape backup environments. The cloud based backup and DR servers on demand become a service which is tested and confirmed to work through their service provider of choice.

As the cost of IP based bandwidth decreases and data encryption over public resources becomes more accepted, the cloud DR option becomes more appealing for constrained IT budgets for both SMB and enterprise companies. The decision to buy DR servers, firewalls, routers, SANS, replication software, and collocation switch to a consideration of buying all these as a service which is maintained and constantly updated by a service provider.

The underlying technologies like virtualization, replication, de-duplication, encryption, and backup optimization create real economies of scale that allow companies without a business continuity plan to purchase one turnkey as a service which is tested and confirmed anytime a change is required in the production environment. Service providers who specialize in cloud based DR bring value added consulting to the table as they can deliver best of breed and customized solutions based on any unique business need.

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